



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

KEVIN M. BURKE
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THOMAS P. LEONARD
DEPUTY STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Contact: Jennifer Mieth, (978) 567-3381
Fire Chief G. Edward Bradley, (508) 830-4213

Woodstove Caused Death of Elderly Plymouth Couple

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Plymouth Fire Chief G. Edward Bradley said their investigation into the February 12 fatal fire at 35 Cherry Street has determined that the fire started while the residents were cleaning or lighting the woodstove. An elderly couple that lived in the home perished in the fire, tragically bringing to three the number of Plymouth residents who died from fire in a single week. A fire earlier in the week took the life of a 77-year old woman on South Meadow Road.

The fire was jointly investigated by the Plymouth Fire Department, Plymouth Police Department, and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and State Police assigned to the Plymouth District Attorney's Office.

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Fire officials across the state have been concerned we would see an increase in heating fires and especially heating with alternative devices this winter. We launched the *Keep Warm, Keep Safe* campaign last fall to inform the public on how to stay safe while keeping warm this winter." Heating is the second leading cause of all home fires in Massachusetts, after cooking. Heating caused ten percent of home fire deaths in 2007. For more information about heating fire safety or for heating assistance, go online to www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe.

Fire Chief Bradley said, "This has been a difficult week for the town of Plymouth losing three people, all over age 65, to fire. On behalf of the town and the Plymouth firefighters, I extend our condolences to the two families."

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Tragically, the home did not have any smoke alarms or carbon monoxide alarms. Working smoke alarms can double your chances of surviving a fire. Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are, generally speaking, required in all homes."

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Chief Bradley said, “If you have an elderly parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or neighbor, please take a moment to see if they have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and offer to change the battery for them or to install them if needed.”

Coan added, “Smoke alarms give you the one thing you don’t have in a fire – time. But it is important to be able to use that time by having a home escape plan with two ways out of every room, making sure all exits are clear, and a meeting place out front for the family.”